COURSE NAME: Wrongful Conviction

COURSE NUMBER: 8635S

PROFESSOR: Tiffany Murphy

ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITES: Criminal Procedure I

DESIRABLE PREREQUISITES: Criminal Procedure II & Evidence

COURSE BOOKS: Course reading will be articles and cases available online. However, students must have access to or purchase Adobe Professional or Standard to review case materials.

METHOD OF GRADING & APPRAISAL OF STUDENT FOR GRADE: Students will write a paper concerning not only the topics discussed but also the practical casework completed during the semester.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF COURSE: Wrongful Convictions is a three credit course offering students an insider’s look into the operation of the criminal justice system. It should be of particular interest to any student interested in working in a prosecutor’s office, public defender’s office or for a firm doing defense work. It is a prerequisite for any student wishing to enroll in the Innocence Project clinic. The course is designed to help students gain insight into features of the criminal justice system that have a tendency to produce wrongful convictions. In addition to examining the causes of wrongful convictions, we will consider systemic reforms that might minimize convicting the innocent. We will also work with The Midwestern Innocence Project on cases of possible actual innocence. Finally, the class will also focus on recurring ethical issues that confront prosecutors and criminal defense lawyers.
COURSE CONTENT:
Topics include eyewitness identification, use of informants, prosecutorial and police misconduct, scientific evidence (DNA, junk science), false confessions, incompetent lawyering compensation and media and investigative journalism, all with a focus on wrongful conviction.

RELEVANCY OF COURSE FOR CAREER PURPOSES: People interested in either criminal prosecution or defense work will discuss some of the problems within the criminal justice system. Discussions will focus on how people are wrongfully convicted and their avenues for relief. Also, anyone who is interested in criminal post-conviction or civil habeas corpus litigation would be greatly aided by this course.